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Chairman: Mr. Sene (Vice-Chairman) . . . . . (Senegal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Ms. McLurg

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In the absence of Mr. Maurer (Switzerland), Mr. Sene (Senegal), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Agenda item 134: Improving the financial situation of the United Nations

1. **Ms. Kane** (Under-Secretary-General for Management) said that she would focus on four main financial indicators: assessments issued, unpaid assessed contributions, available cash resources and debt to Member States. The overall financial picture was mixed, although there had been improvement in some areas.

2. Turning first to the regular budget, she noted that levels of assessments and payments had both been higher in 2009 than in 2008, by $619 million and $534 million, respectively. Unpaid assessed contributions had increased to $830 million as at 13 October 2009, compared to $756 million a year earlier. As at 13 October, 120 Member States — or 13 fewer than on 24 October 2008 — had paid their regular budget assessments in full, although 3 additional States had paid in the meantime. She urged the remaining Member States to pay their assessed contributions for 2009 as soon as possible. Of the total of $830 million outstanding as at 13 October 2009, 93 per cent had been owed by a single Member State and 7 per cent by the remaining Member States. The final picture for 2009 would depend on the action taken by those States in the months that followed.

3. Cash resources for the regular budget comprised the General Fund, into which assessed contributions were paid, the Working Capital Fund, which had been approved at a level of $150 million by the General Assembly, and the Special Account. As at 13 October 2009, the total cash resources available had stood at $787 million, compared to $411 million on 31 December 2008. The month-by-month cash position reflected an anticipated positive cash balance at the end of December 2009. The final position would depend on action by the major contributors.

4. A number of factors made it difficult to predict financial outcomes for peacekeeping activities: demand was unpredictable; the financial period for peacekeeping ran from 1 July to 30 June rather than from 1 January to 31 December; assessments were issued separately for each operation; and, since assessments could only be issued through the mandate period approved by the Security Council for each mission, they were issued for different periods throughout the year. All those factors complicated a comparison between the financial situation of peacekeeping operations and that of the regular budget and the International Tribunals.

5. The total amount outstanding for peacekeeping operations as at 13 October 2009 had been over $2.1 billion, approximately $763 million lower than at the end of 2008 and $796 million below the level as at 24 October 2008. The current level of unpaid assessments was partly related to a lower level of peacekeeping assessments for the 2009/10 fiscal year pending approval of a new scale of assessments for 2010. The decrease also reflected reduced amounts owed for peacekeeping by major contributors compared to a year earlier.

6. Due to the unpredictable levels and timing of peacekeeping assessments, it could be more difficult for Member States to keep fully current with their payments. The 19 Member States that had paid all their peacekeeping assessments as at 13 October 2009 and the 2 Member States that had subsequently paid in full therefore deserved special thanks.

7. The cash balance in peacekeeping accounts had stood at some $3.3 billion as at 13 October 2009. That amount was divided between the accounts of a number of ongoing and closed operations and the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund, but there were restrictions on its use. The General Assembly routinely specified that no peacekeeping mission should be financed by borrowing from other active missions, and the terms of reference of the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund restricted its use to new operations and the expansion of existing operations. Further, only some of the cash available in the accounts of closed peacekeeping operations was available for borrowing.

8. As at 13 October 2009, cash in the accounts of active missions had totalled approximately $2.8 billion, the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund had had a balance of $142 million and the accounts of closed missions had totalled $470 million. According to current estimates, a total of just over $2.2 billion would be available in peacekeeping accounts at the end of 2009, with approximately $1.6 billion in the accounts of active missions, $469 million in the accounts of closed missions and $144 million in the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund.

9. Of the $469 million expected to be available in the accounts of closed missions at the end of 2009, $218 million had been set aside for payment of

outstanding liabilities, such as troop and equipment payments and credits to be returned to Member States. That left only $251 million available for cross-borrowing by active peacekeeping operations and for other accounts, including the regular budget and the International Tribunals. That was a very thin margin for cross-borrowing, which had been required in 2008 for seven active peacekeeping operations, namely the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNIFCYP), the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), for a total of $148 million. So far in 2009, cross-borrowing of $49 million had been required for UNOMIG, MINURSO, UNOCI and the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT).

10. Revised projections of the Organization's debt to Member States suggested that the amount outstanding would total $944 million at the end of 2009, which was higher than the projection of $765 million made in May and the amount of $431 million outstanding as at 31 December 2008. Payments for 2009 took into account cash projections, which were affected by the reduced level of assessments pending approval of a new scale of assessments. New obligations had increased in 2009, mainly due to deployments of troops in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), of a military component in the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) and of additional military contingents and formed police units in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), but had been partly offset by the termination of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), the downsizing of formed police units in UNMIK and a reduction in the authorized military strength of UNMIL. A detailed breakdown of the amounts owed to individual Member States as at 30 September 2009 was being circulated.

11. Payments in respect of troop obligations had been broadly current up to February/March 2009 for MINUSTAH and UNMIK and up to July/August 2009 for MINURCAT, MONUC, UNAMID, UNMIL, UNOCI, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS). Payments for contingent-owned equipment had been current up to March/June 2009 for MONUC, UNAMID, UNDOF, UNFICYP, UNIFIL, UNMIL and UNMIS. Owing to cash shortfalls, however, reimbursements had fallen behind the normal quarterly process for MINURSO, UNMIK, UNOMIG, UNFICYP, MINUSTAH, UNMIT and UNOCI. In that connection, delays in the receipt of contributions affected the Secretariat's ability to make quarterly payments to troop contributors, as it must first ensure adequate provision of cash resources to cover ongoing operating costs. Nevertheless, the Secretariat would monitor the situation and would make the payments as soon as sufficient cash was available. The Secretary-General was committed to meeting the Organization's obligations to troop and equipment contributors as expeditiously as possible. To that end, Member States must meet their financial obligations to the United Nations in full and on time and the relevant memorandums of understanding must be finalized.

12. The financial position of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia had worsened slightly in 2009, with assessments somewhat higher than in 2008 and the amount outstanding higher by $10 million. As at 13 October 2009, 83 Member States had paid their assessed contributions in full — 14 fewer than as at 24 October 2008 — and she urged the remaining Member States to follow their example. The breakdown of unpaid assessed contributions showed that one Member State accounted for 65 per cent of the total. If recent trends continued, the Tribunals would end the year with positive cash balances. Once again, however, the actual outcome would depend on Member States meeting their financial obligations in full and on time.

13. Recalling that the total budget for the capital master plan of $1.9 billion had been approved by the General Assembly in December 2006, she said that 180 Member States were under the multi-year payment system while 12 Member States had opted for one-time payment. As at 13 October 2009, payments totalling $1.1 billion had been made, with $86 million still outstanding. A number of Member States that had not opted for one-time payment had made advance payments. She thanked the 119 Member States that had paid their capital master plan assessments, and urged all Member States to pay their assessed contributions

in full and on time to ensure the timely implementation of the plan.

14. In conclusion, she paid special tribute to the 18 Member States that had paid in full all assessments due and payable by 13 October 2009 and the three additional Member States that had paid in full subsequently. The financial indicators for 2009 were mixed: cash positions were projected to be positive at year end for all funds, although the final outcome would depend on contributions made in the last quarter. Unpaid assessments had decreased for peacekeeping compared to October 2008 but had increased for the regular budget, the International Tribunals and the capital master plan. The number of Member States meeting their obligations in full was lower than a year earlier in all budget categories. In order to maintain the financial health of the Organization, it remained as critical as ever for Member States to meet their obligations in full and on time.

Agenda item 135: Pattern of conferences (A/64/32, A/64/136, A/64/166, A/64/371 and A/64/484)

15. **Ms. Kaudel** (Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences), introducing the report of the Committee on Conferences for 2009 (A/64/32), said that, with respect to the draft calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011, the Committee had considered various proposals on the rescheduling of the first and second parts of the resumed sessions, as outlined in paragraph 15 of the report. She had already held informal consultations with the Chairmen of the Fifth Committee and the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and would also meet with the President of the Economic and Social Council to discuss the issue.

16. The Chairman of CPC had underlined that in the previous three years, meetings of the Fifth Committee at the second part of the resumed session had encroached on the annual sessions of CPC. He had proposed that the eight weeks allocated to CPC in each biennium should be adjusted so that the Committee, instead of meeting for four weeks each year, should have a three-week session in budget years and a five-week session in off-budget years. Under that proposal, in off-budget years the CPC report would be considered by the Economic and Social Council at its resumed rather than its main session. The Chairman of CPC had stressed that the one-week break between the end of the Fifth Committee's work at the second part of the resumed session and the start of the CPC annual session should be maintained in order to allow for the preparation of documentation. The Chairman of the Fifth Committee, for his part, would consult the Bureau of that Committee.

17. With regard to the utilization of conference services and facilities, addressed in chapter III, section B, of the report, three of the Main Committees of the General Assembly had reached or surpassed the benchmark of 80 per cent in 2008, thanks to better discipline in starting meetings on time and better coordination with conference planners. Suggestions for improving the utilization rate of bodies that had under-utilized conference resources during the period from 2006 to 2008 included providing notice of foreseeable cancellations, starting meetings on time and reducing meeting time in advance when shorter meetings were anticipated.

18. Turning to the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings, she said that the Committee on Conferences had expressed its regret at the fact that only 77 per cent of meetings held at the four main duty stations had been provided with interpretation services in 2008, compared to 84 per cent in 2007. The draft resolution contained in annex I to the report requested the Secretary-General to ensure that, as far as possible, all requests for conference services were met, and requested the Secretariat to inform the requestors as early as possible about the availability of conference services, including interpretation, and about any changes that might occur before the meeting.

19. In the context of the Committee's discussion of the impact on meetings of implementation of the capital master plan, the Committee members had visited the Albano Building, to which all staff involved in the documents processing chain had been relocated, and the Publishing Section in the basement under the temporary North Lawn Building. The Committee had requested the Secretary-General to keep it informed of all matters relating to conference services and facilities for the duration of the capital master plan.

20. Chapter V of the report addressed the issue of integrated global management. The Committee had had before it the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the integrated global management initiative (A/64/166) and had held a videoconference on the subject with the offices away from Headquarters. In the draft resolution, the

Committee took note of the OIOS recommendations and requested the Secretary-General to ensure their full implementation and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session through the Committee on Conferences.

21. With regard to documentation and publication-related matters, the Committee had discussed the reports of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, resulting in operative paragraphs 1 and 2 of section IV of the draft resolution. By paragraph 1, the Assembly decided that all reports adopted by the Working Group at its fourth and fifth sessions and the additional information submitted by the States under review before the adoption of the outcome by the Council would be issued as official documents in all official languages of the United Nations and requested the Secretary-General to undertake the necessary measures to that effect; by paragraph 2, it decided that all reports adopted by the Working Group would be issued as documents in all official languages in a timely manner before their consideration by the Council and requested the Secretary-General to ensure the necessary support. It was the Committee's understanding that the operative paragraph 1 would not entail any programme budget implications; instead, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management would shift its priorities and the production of summary records at the United Nations Office at Geneva would be delayed.

22. The Committee on Conferences had recognized the work done by the task force chaired by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in addressing the problem of issuance of documents for the Fifth Committee and had welcomed its continued efforts to shepherd the submission of documents by author departments. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly, at its sixty-sixth session, should review the work of the task force and consider additional measures to ensure compliance with submission deadlines if the goal of 90 per cent compliance had not been met.

23. The Committee had examined translation- and interpretation-related matters in some detail: its discussions were reflected in chapter VII of the report and its recommendations were contained in section V of the draft resolution.

24. **Mr. Shaaban** (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/64/136), said that it included details of the progress made in the implementation of initiatives to improve conference management. To ensure the increased transparency that Member States expected, the supplementary information provided to members of the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) was also being provided to the Fifth Committee members.

25. With respect to integrated global management and the OIOS evaluation of its implementation, he agreed with many of the findings in the OIOS report (A/64/166), which referred to a lack of dedicated funds to implement integrated global management, and the continued existence of dual reporting lines and resulting ambiguity as to the exact extent of the authority of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management. Those were major constraints. OIOS failed to acknowledge that integrated global management existed, was accepted by all stakeholders, and had further potential. Financial savings had never been the overarching objective of integrated global management. Indeed, the draft resolution submitted by the Committee on Conferences reaffirmed that the major goals of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management were to provide high quality documents in a timely manner in all official languages as well as high quality conference services at all duty stations and to achieve those aims as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

26. Turning to documents management, he noted that the predictability of the workflow had improved significantly in recent years, leading, for example, to more timely production of documents for the Fifth Committee at the second part of the resumed sixty-third session, despite very tight deadlines. The Department continued to seek the timely submission of concise documents as the key to orderly and efficient documents processing. The Committee on Conferences, in its draft resolution, had recognized the work of the task force in addressing the issuance of documents for the Fifth Committee and had urged author departments to fully adhere to deadlines. The task force on documentation had proven to be an agile and practical vehicle for improvement at all levels of the documents processing chain.

27. The Department had continued to grapple with the challenges posed by the voluminous workload

generated by the Human Rights Council and its machinery. Substantive discussion of the issue would take place when the relevant OIOS report was considered by the Fifth Committee. He welcomed the establishment in Geneva of a task force led by the President of the Human Rights Council to find a solution that would respond to Member States' concerns and enable the Secretariat to address a predictable workload in an orderly fashion.

28. With respect to the translation of the reports of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, 15 reports were currently being translated contractually and would be processed by the beginning of the Working Group's seventh session, in early 2010. Processing was within existing resources at the expense of other clients of the Department. All reports could be processed if they respected the 10-week rule for submission of documents and the word limit. The Human Rights Council secretariat had calculated a shortfall of $5,371,400 for its sixth and seventh sessions combined, which could be offset if the issuance of summary records remained suspended. It should be noted that when freelance language staff were hired, they were physically present on specific dates to process documents. If documents were not submitted on time, the freelancers would be paid for work they had not performed.

29. Turning to the capital master plan, he reiterated that sufficient conference room space would be available for all meetings on the calendar of conferences and meetings, while space for non-core activities would be limited during some phases of the project. The Publishing Section was bearing the brunt of the disruption during the construction, while the interpreters, too, were working in conditions that were not ideal. Adequate staffing of the Department's information technology section was vital for the uninterrupted provision of critical services. He hoped that the Fifth Committee would ensure the provision of the financial and human resources required to ensure uninterrupted conference services throughout the implementation of the capital master plan.

30. Lastly, he turned to Member States' evaluation of the Department's services, which was a key performance indicator. The annual survey was being revised in order to harmonize its contents across all duty stations and unify the methodology used to obtain feedback. He would welcome any suggestions that might improve the quality of the survey and the response rate. Expressing disappointment at the level of attendance by Member States at the informational meetings held by the Department as an alternative source of feedback, he noted that informal contacts could also serve that purpose and that he would welcome comments from delegations at any time.

31. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to a letter from the Permanent Representative of the Philippines addressed to the Secretary-General (A/64/371).

32. **Mr. Kelapile** (Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee's report on the pattern of conferences (A/64/484) should be considered in conjunction with the relevant section of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 (A/64/7).

33. On a number of occasions the Advisory Committee had expressed its full support for the concept of integrated global management as a means of maximizing the efficient use of resources and improving the overall quality of conference services. Although the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management maintained that the pursuit of financial savings had never been the main objective of integrated global management, the Advisory Committee nevertheless reiterated its earlier recommendation that the Department's existing methodologies for the collection and analysis of costing information should be further developed, for better knowledge of the costs of activities would provide a better basis for assessing the efficiency of administrative functions and the cost-effectiveness of work processes, thereby enabling the Department's managers to determine the most effective ways of implementing mandates.

34. The Advisory Committee noted that the Department was in broad agreement with the findings and recommendations of OIOS on integrated global management. In order to enhance the likelihood that measures taken within the framework of integrated global management would further contribute to improving the Department's performance, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General's next report on the pattern of conferences should outline the specific steps taken to implement the OIOS findings and recommendations.

35. With regard to documents management, the Advisory Committee noted that particular attention had

been devoted to improving the timely submission of documents to the Fifth Committee. In the absence of incentives to encourage author departments to submit documents on time, the Department was focusing on raising awareness of the work involved in documents processing in the hope that greater understanding on the part of author departments would lead to better compliance with the time frames and page limits set out in the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The Advisory Committee stressed that the timely submission of documentation was the key to the effective implementation of the Department's mandate and therefore urged all author departments to comply with submission deadlines and page-limit requirements.

36. The specific challenges associated with the continuing expansion of the activities of the Human Rights Council were discussed in paragraphs 16 to 19 of the ACABQ report, where it was noted, in particular, that the Department's decision to prioritize the processing of the reports of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review had resulted in a backlog of summary records of the meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies amounting to some five million words. It was not clear how that backlog would be addressed. In the light of its continuing concerns about the adequacy of conference-servicing capacity in Geneva, the Advisory Committee reiterated its earlier recommendation that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to monitor the situation closely and report to the Assembly on any developments which might have financial implications.

37. With respect to translation and interpretation, the Advisory Committee had commented on succession planning, the vacancy situation at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and the measures taken to ensure the provision of high-quality language services. With regard, in particular, to the Secretary-General's suggestion that, in order to compensate for the high number of retirements, it might be worth considering raising or waiving the mandatory age of retirement for language staff, the Advisory Committee believed that the financial and administrative implications of that course of action for one category of staff should be thoroughly explored, including from the perspective of equality of treatment, before a formal proposal was made.

38. **Mr. Hauge** (Office of Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the integrated global management initiative of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (A/64/166), said that the evaluation had been requested by the Department. The objective had been to assess the relevance and efficiency of the integrated global management initiative, with a special focus on the progress made since the coining of that term in 2004.

39. The Department had taken two approaches: the preparation of the compendium of administrative policies, practices and procedures in the period 2005-2007; and the implementation of three global information technology projects on conference management. However, the overall objective of harmonizing business practices and the establishment of information technology systems at the four United Nations duty stations had not been attained. Furthermore, resource-sharing across the four duty stations had been limited in terms of human and financial resources since 2004. The focus of the duty stations on serving a local constituency of client bodies offered few formal incentives or spare capacity for sharing. The limited workload sharing had taken place on an informal basis. In addition, the Department's statistics on service delivery were embedded with the respective, and differing, definitions of the individual duty stations; the data were therefore inconsistent. OIOS had concluded that the initiative might have highlighted rather than resolved the differences between work practices at the duty stations. There had been little change in the Department's basic work processes, and no overall financial savings could be associated with the initiative. Neither the total cost nor the total volume of combined conference-service delivery had changed significantly since 2004.

40. Another constraint was that the Department had no formal control over staff members serving away from New York. It did have budgetary responsibility for the duty stations but in practice the financial planning and budgeting process allowed little scope for the strategic management of funds across duty stations. The chief lesson learned from the exercise was that without someone at the centre with appropriate responsibility and authority no real reform was likely.

41. In response to the OIOS findings the Department had called for more credit to be given for the collaborative efforts made since 2004, and OIOS itself wished to emphasize the constructive manner in which the evaluation had been conducted. OIOS was mindful of the complexity of the constraints on the

implementation of the initiative and it noted that the Department had accepted all of its recommendations.

42. **Mr. Elhag** (Sudan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group attached great importance to the agenda item. It commended the Committee on Conferences on the quality of its report and endorsed the recommendations contained therein. The draft resolution submitted in the report should serve as the framework for the negotiations on the item. The Group emphasized that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management was required to treat all six official languages and all four duty stations equally.

43. The Group hoped that improved coordination between planning officers and technical secretariats would produce a further rise in the overall utilization of conference services. It noted with satisfaction that all the Nairobi-based agencies had continued to hold their meetings in Nairobi; that practice should be continued. However, the Nairobi Office remained the only duty station dependent to some extent on extrabudgetary resources, despite the General Assembly's recognition that all duty stations should be treated equally. The Group welcomed the efforts to address the staffing problem at the Nairobi Office and trusted that the Member States would adopt measures to alleviate the problem. It also welcomed the efforts to increase the utilization of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa.

44. In its resolution 63/248 the General Assembly had recognized the importance of the meetings of regional groupings and the need for them to be provided with interpretation services, but the provision of conference services for such meetings had declined in 2008. The Department should try harder to ensure that adequate services were provided.

45. The Group noted the Department's contingency plans for dealing with any disruption resulting from implementation of the capital master plan. In view of the importance of information and communication technology in the Organization's work, uninterrupted service must be provided throughout the implementation period. The Group welcomed the conclusions of OIOS on the integrated global management initiative and looked forward to the report which the Secretary-General was to prepare in the light of those conclusions.

46. The timely issuance of documents in all six official languages had a direct impact on the efficiency of the Organization's work. The efforts to address that pressing problem were welcome, in particular the establishment of the interdepartmental task force, which had already taken positive action to deal with the problem of the late issuance of Fifth Committee documents. The task force should become a permanent mechanism for handling Fifth Committee documents. The Department itself must continue to push other parts of the Secretariat in the right direction and must report on the status of documentation whenever so requested.

47. The Group was ready to adopt additional measures to ensure compliance by author departments with the deadlines for submission of documents and with the format of reports prescribed by the General Assembly. The Chairmen of the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee should promote cooperation on the issuance of documents in order to allow the Fifth Committee sufficient time to consider the documents submitted to it; the programme of work should be determined by the importance accorded to agenda items by the Member States, not by the date on which reports were issued.

48. The Group was dismayed that some of the reports issued under the universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council had not been translated into all six official languages. The Department had made a commitment to expedite the translation of the remaining reports, and the Group would seek updated information on the progress made. It hoped that the measures to address the demographic transition in the language services would yield positive results and resolve the problem of the vacancy rates at all the duty stations, especially Nairobi. The recruitment of interns and freelance interpreters could certainly be useful, but care must be taken not to compromise the quality of interpretation.

49. **Mr. Råsbrant** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia and Republic of Moldova, welcomed the report of the Committee on Conferences and the draft resolution contained in annex I. It appreciated the progress made so far with regard to integrated global management and was glad that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had accepted the OIOS findings and recommendations.

50. The European Union welcomed the Secretariat's continuing efforts to avoid the late submission of documents, including Fifth Committee documents. With regard to the calendar of conferences, it was in favour of adding one or two weeks at the end of the second part of the resumed session, at the expense of the main part of the session.

51. Since adequate conference facilities and the highest standards of language services in all six official languages were essential to the work of United Nations intergovernmental and expert bodies, the steps taken by the Secretary-General to address the issue more effectively were welcome. The European Union acknowledged the progress made across the duty stations and noted the comments and recommendations of the Committee on Conferences in that regard. The Secretary-General must ensure that the implementation of the capital master plan did not impair the high quality of language and conference services which the Member States justifiably expected.

52. **Ms. Pataca** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the Group noted with appreciation that all the Nairobi-based bodies had now complied with the relevant General Assembly resolutions by holding all their meetings in Nairobi. The Secretary-General should continue to ensure compliance. The steady increase in the utilization of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa to 76 per cent in 2008 was welcome, but the centre would be faced with new challenges as a result of the increasing competition in the conference industry in Addis Ababa. But there must be no regression: the centre's management must continue its efforts to reach the 80 per cent utilization benchmark.

53. The General Assembly had consistently recognized the meetings of regional groupings as crucial to the smooth functioning of the Organization. It was therefore worrying that 50 per cent of the requests for meeting services made by the African Group had not been satisfied. An explanation would be welcome.

54. The long-standing issue of the vacancy rate at the Nairobi Office remained a source of concern to the African Group, which welcomed the proactive approach of the Division of Conference Services in Nairobi, in particular the classification of some interpreter and translator posts at a higher level, the provision of incentives to encourage staff to serve for longer periods, and the possibility of providing training programmes for language staff.

55. **Ms. Berlanga** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Group appreciated the efforts made by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the interdepartmental task force with respect to issuance of Fifth Committee documents and looked forward to the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General under General Assembly resolution 63/248. The Group had repeatedly stated its position on the issue of the resource requirements of the Human Rights Council and on the translation of the documents pertaining to the universal periodic review; it was to be hoped that the task force would find a definitive solution to the issue.

56. The Group was concerned about the demographic transition in the Department, which should explore further ways of filling vacancies, but it agreed with the Advisory Committee's comment on the financial and administrative implications of raising or waiving the age of separation for one category of staff. With regard to integrated global management, it looked forward to hearing about the measures taken to implement the OIOS conclusions and recommendations.

57. **Mr. Davide** (Philippines) said that conference management, in particular the provision of interpretation, translation and documentation services, played a vital role in United Nations operations and that the services in question must be kept up to par. As far as documentation was concerned, the clamour for reform had become irresistible. Convinced of the need to build on the progress made in the past year, his delegation had submitted the proposals contained in its letter of 8 September 2009 (A/64/371). It believed, firstly, that the task force should become a standing body on Fifth Committee documentation. Secondly, the General Assembly should adopt stronger measures to ensure compliance with deadlines by author departments. Thirdly, there should be adequate intervals between the adoption of new mandates and the consideration of the documents concerned; the General Assembly might adjust the biennial calendar of conferences so that the first and second parts of the resumed session would begin later than at present. Fourthly, the Chairmen of the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee should promote cooperation, coordination and communication on matters relating to documentation as a first step towards the goal of having the date of consideration of a question determined by the priorities of the Member States, not by the date of issuance of the documents.

58. The Committee on Conferences had discussed those proposals and incorporated some of their elements in the draft resolution contained in its report, which his delegation strongly endorsed as the basis for negotiations. The Member States should adopt practical solutions to what was an embarrassing perennial problem.

59. **Mr. Cumberbatch** (Cuba) said that the decisions taken on conference services had a decisive effect on the functioning of intergovernmental bodies: the aim should be to facilitate the deliberations of the Member States.

60. Cuba reiterated its objection to the use of United Nations facilities by certain States, with the cooperation of the Secretariat, to engage in activities hostile to other Member States. The General Assembly had commented on the issue in paragraphs 12 and 13 of resolution 63/248, but the incidents continued and the Secretariat had taken no action to prevent them; indeed, even senior Secretariat officials were directly involved in campaigns of defamation against some Member States.

61. His delegation reiterated its satisfaction with the status of documentation of the Human Rights Council relating to the universal periodic review and expected the Secretariat to complete the translations in question by the end of 2009. The review had been established to avoid any recurrence of the shameful situations leading to the disappearance of the discredited Commission on Human Rights.

62. His delegation would closely follow the Committee's deliberations on issues of particular significance for the work of the Organization, including the use of conference services, the support given to regional organizations, in particular the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement, and the impact of the capital master plan on conference services.

63. **Mr. Kassaye** (Ethiopia) said that the continuing efforts to promote the use of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa deserved commendation, but much more would have to be done if the improved utilization rate was to be sustained. The local factors mentioned in paragraph 49 of the Secretary-General's report on the pattern of conferences (A/64/136) should serve as an incentive in seeking viable solutions. Valuable lessons could be learned from the experience of other United Nations conference centres. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management should indicate what steps were to be taken to increase the centre's utilization rate still further on the basis of clear strategies and the provision of adequate resources. His delegation was still waiting for the Department to furnish written replies to the questions it had asked at the substantive session of the Committee on Conferences.

64. **Mr. Soomro** (Pakistan) said that the Fifth Committee's consideration of the agenda item would benefit greatly from implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences and that the draft resolution contained therein provided a good basis for its deliberations. Efficient conference management provided the tools with which the Organization did its work. All duty stations and all six official languages must be treated equally.

65. Given the demographic transition in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, there was a need to increase the number of competitive examinations for the recruitment of language staff. Action should also be taken to check the waste of conference resources, including a requirement of punctuality in the conduct of meetings. His delegation supported the concept of integrated global management, but it agreed with OIOS on the need for a precise and consistent articulation of the initiative's objectives and for measurable and time-bound targets. Managerial initiatives should not be merely means of saving face and deflecting criticism.

66. Proper methods must be introduced to ensure that the work of the Human Rights Council was not hindered by inadequate provision of services, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights must ensure that the relevant information was reflected accurately in the budget documents. His delegation looked forward to the OIOS report on the impact of the inadequate provision of resources to the Council. With regard to paragraph 67 of the Secretary-General's report on the pattern of conferences, his delegation reiterated that it was the prerogative of the Member States to determine the length and timing of their submissions to the Organization.

67. The staffing problem at the Nairobi Office should be addressed expeditiously.

68. The fact that the overall utilization factor for 2008 had remained at 85 per cent reflected a managerial weakness which must be addressed. The reduced provision of services for meetings of regional groupings was regrettable. As acknowledged in General Assembly resolution 63/248, such meetings

facilitated the work of the Organization; they should therefore receive increased priority.

69. One particular drawback of the perennially late issuance of documents was that it impaired the consideration of reports by smaller delegations. The steps taken to tackle the problem were welcome, but a number of important documents were still being issued very late. It was to be hoped that the measures envisaged by the Secretary-General to address the underlying causes of the problem, including the establishment of the task force on a permanent footing, would produce early results. All Secretariat departments must produce their documents in accordance with the format prescribed by the General Assembly, for failure to do so caused a further problem for the Member States and, again, for smaller delegations in particular.

70. **Mr. Diab** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that delegations depended on the simultaneous issuance of documents in all six official languages and the availability of high-quality interpretation services in order to discharge their responsibilities. The work of the Committee on Conferences was therefore particularly important to delegations that spoke official languages other than English.

71. His delegation welcomed the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the General Assembly should explicitly authorize the bodies that had requested exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243 to meet in New York during the main part of the Assembly's sixty-fourth session.

72. Noting that the utilization of conference resources at the four duty stations had improved in 2008, he urged the Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences to continue her consultations with the intergovernmental bodies that had utilized less than the benchmark of 80 per cent of their allocated resources in 2008 in order to encourage them to make better use of conference resources. While the establishment of a "strategic reserve" for the provision of interpretation services to the meetings of bodies that were entitled to meet "as required" was a positive initiative, consideration should be given to raising the reserve to four meetings a week.

73. Recalling that, in its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly had recognized the importance of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States for the smooth functioning of the sessions of intergovernmental bodies, he said that that "strategic reserve" could be used to increase the interpretation services that were available for such meetings and called on the Secretariat to make further efforts in that regard. His delegation also noted with satisfaction that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/283 B, all meetings of Nairobi-based United Nations bodies had been held in Nairobi in 2008.

74. The implementation of the capital master plan, including the temporary relocation of conference-servicing staff to temporary facilities, should not compromise the quality of conference services provided to Member States in the six official languages and the equal treatment of the language services, which should be provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources.

75. His delegation agreed with the conclusions and recommendations of OIOS in its report on integrated global management (A/64/166) and looked forward to the Secretary-General's report on their implementation to be submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

76. He was concerned that, despite the importance of the timely issuance of documents in the six official languages, which had a direct impact on the efficiency of the work done by the various United Nations bodies, the six-week rule was frequently disregarded. He welcomed the efforts of the task force chaired by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in positively addressing the problem of issuance of documents for the Fifth Committee.

77. His delegation was concerned that some of the reports that had been adopted by the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council had not been translated into all official languages and was disappointed by the contradictory explanations that had been offered by the Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management as to how that had come to pass. The creation of a coordination mechanism between the Human Rights Council and the Department would enable the latter to better manage the document submission process and allocate the resources needed for their translation.

78. With regard to the interpretation and translation services, he drew attention to the importance of the standardization and development of terminology through coordination between those services; the terminology used should reflect the latest linguistic norms in order to ensure the highest quality. The demographic transition

affecting the language services required the Department to work closely with the Office of Human Resources Management with a view to increasing the frequency of competitive examinations in order to address the shortfall in staff. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the efforts of the Secretariat to contact universities and schools of interpretation and translation, particularly in the Arab world, and the enhanced training programme for serving language staff. He looked forward to the results of the comprehensive review of the examination process, including a review of the entry level for language staff, that would be conducted by the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management by the end of 2009.

79. His delegation had taken note of the impact of freelance recruitment on the quality of interpretation at all duty stations owing to the fierce competition among international organizations and among duty stations. The Secretariat should therefore consider raising remuneration for freelance interpreters with a view to attracting the most qualified among them.

80. **Mr. Prokhorov** (Russian Federation) said that the Committee on Conferences played an important role in ensuring the efficient conduct of United Nations meetings and that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had undertaken a number of useful initiatives. The key to the success of the Department's integrated global management initiative at all duty stations was a balanced division of labour between Headquarters and the duty stations, with the Department's coordination function ensuring optimum use of potential and economy of resources.

81. Special caution should be exercised in reforming the working methods of the language services: the main objective must always be to improve the quality of translation and interpretation in the six official languages. The overall quality of conference servicing depended in many respects on the creation of the same working conditions and an equal provision of human and financial resources for all the language services. It was particularly important to ensure consistency and proper planning in the recruitment of temporary assistance.

82. The members of the Committee should take a constructive approach to the question of the services, including translation, provided in connection with the universal periodic review, making a realistic assessment of the Secretariat's capacity and not undermining the approved working methods of the Human Rights Council. What was at stake was the long-term improvement of the human rights situation in the Member States and indeed the fate of one of the chief achievements of the reform of the Organization.

83. With regard to the depletion of the rosters of candidates for the language services, the biannual information meetings on language-service problems helped delegations to understand the situation and gave the Secretariat first-hand response from the users of the services. However, the Department must take concrete action on the problems raised. The Department's approach of reaching out to teaching establishments was welcome; the implementation of that initiative on a rational resource basis ought to form part of a strategy for the long-term planning of the competitive examinations for language staff. Other measures, in particular raising the age of separation, to tackle the problem of demographic changes in the language services, could not be discussed individually under the agenda item, for the issue was one for all the organizations of the United Nations system. It should be taken up by the General Assembly as part of overall personnel policy and by the International Civil Service Commission.

84. His delegation welcomed the efforts made by the Secretariat to improve the quality of contractual translation and looked forward to receiving information about the results of the action taken.

85. **Mr. Andanje** (Kenya) said that, although progress had been made in addressing the high vacancy rates in the language services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, sustained efforts were required to resolve the issue once and for all. To that end, he welcomed the programme initiated at Nairobi to provide on-the-job training to young translators and interpreters who had yet to pass the United Nations examination and the conference organized by the Office in February 2009 to bring together representatives of universities and international organizations, government officials and freelance language professionals. He was pleased that the University of Nairobi had agreed to pilot the effort by African universities to establish master's programmes and hoped that offers of support for training made by the stakeholders at the conference would materialize. Enhanced capacity-building and the development of partnerships with universities could provide a long-term solution to the problem of high vacancy rates at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

86. With regard to the utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa, he was pleased that the management's marketing efforts had begun to bear fruit. Considering the emerging challenges in the local conference industry, however, those efforts must be sustained in order to further enhance the marketing and utilization of the conference centre.

87. **Mr. Safaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in order to safeguard the credibility and neutrality of the United Nations as enshrined in the Charter, it was imperative for the Secretariat to adhere strictly to the provisions of paragraphs 12 and 13 of General Assembly resolution 63/248 on the use of the Organization's premises, which was a highly sensitive issue.

88. **Ms. Lewis** (Director, Documentation Division) said that responses to most of the questions raised by delegations were included in the written information that would be provided to delegations in informal consultations. With respect to the translation of the reports for the Human Rights Council, she reiterated that, in recognition of the obligation to provide the documentation that was requested, the Department would continue to review the situation in consultation with the Council's secretariat. She reiterated that the timely issuance of documents was always directly linked to their timely submission. In planning its capacity, the Department was largely governed by the calendar of conferences and therefore had to contend with peaks and valleys in the workload throughout the year. Workload sharing had to take those peaks and valleys into account and was limited to some extent.

89. With respect to the demographic transition currently under way in the language services, a review of the examination process had begun, led by the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management. It was estimated in the Department that some 50 examinations would be required each year to deal with the staffing crisis, while the Examination and Tests Section of the Office of Human Resources Management had stated clearly that it could not handle such a large number of examinations. It was hoped that the review would identify ways to shorten and streamline the process with a view to more regular examinations so that complete, up-to-date rosters could be established for all six official languages.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.